

# News Release



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**Contacts:** Sheryl Watson, Information Officer  
(916) 654-7538  
Lisa Sigler, Newmont  
(303) 778-8355 or  
[Lisa.sigler@newmont.com](mailto:Lisa.sigler@newmont.com)

## **CA State Parks Provides Update on Empire Mine 2006 Work Plans Some Trails at Empire Mine Closed Temporarily**

Soil sampling has been completed at Empire Mine State Historic Park. Results shows that nearly all 14 miles of trails can remain open. Approximately 1 ½ miles of trail, however, showed elevated levels of arsenic and are being closed this week, until further evaluation.

"Keep in mind that this closure is temporary. While we regret any inconvenience, it is important that people observe our signs and fences for their own safety while we work to restore these places," said Sector Superintendent Ron Munson, who heads Empire Mine and other parks in the Sierra Gold Sector. "There is still plenty of space for visitors to enjoy horseback riding, hiking and walking through the park."

The trails and trail segments being affected by closure and/or resurfacing activity are the Prescott Hill Mine Trail, Prescott Hill Cross Cut Trail, the Daisy Hill Mine Trail, the Conlon Mine Trail, and segments of the Power Line trail, the Osborn Hill Loop Trail, the Hard Rock Trail, and an unofficial trail along the eastern border of the park.

Despite the closures, the park is working to maintain a continuous loop trail. Approximately a half mile is slated for resurfacing with a road base material beginning in early 2007. Assessment and remediation measures will be completed before any of the closed trails are reopened.

A map designating the open and closed areas is available online at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov), and at the Empire Mine Visitors Center. The maps will also be made available at major trailheads in mid-January.

Trail soil sampling is one component of the five work plans underway that will help identify and reduce any potential effects from historic mining and milling operations. As a historic gold mine, the park has areas where mining activity brought to the surface rock that contained naturally occurring minerals that contain metals such as arsenic, lead, cadmium and others. The land was mined for 106 years until 1956, before becoming a state park in 1974.

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California State Parks and Newmont USA LTD, a mining company, have been working on the park since the five 2006 Work Plans were first outlined last summer. In addition to collecting and analyzing more than 480 trail soil samples, the two organizations erected exclusion fencing, posted signs, tested soils in employee housing yards, and installed a stream monitoring station at the Magenta Drain. The monitoring station has collected five months of data. Further, they tested soils on the six-acre Red Dirt Pile and completed engineering on the cleanup design. The RDP has been fenced off and coated with a soil binder to control erosion this winter.

The environmental work is being conducted under the oversight of the Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

“With the knowledge we have gained in the last six months, we are in a better position to move forward with cleanup activities for this historic park,” said Munson.

Following is a brief recap of additional actions completed and planned:

### **Magenta Drain Work Plan**

Magenta Drain is located west of Highway 174 and south of the Memorial Park Tennis Court. The drain discharges water to an unnamed creek, which flows through Memorial Park before entering an underground storm water drain. As planned, the drain and creek have been fenced off to prevent access and a continuous stream monitoring station has been installed. The monitoring station provides for the continuous monitoring of stream flow, pH, specific conductivity and temperature. As outlined in the 2006 Work Plans monitoring that began in July 2006 will continue for one year, after which test results will be evaluated.

### **Red Dirt Pile Work Plan**

The Red Dirt Pile (RDP) is a closed off six-acre area located about a quarter mile south of the visitors center. The RDP consists of a weathered waste rock pile generated during past mining operations on which sulfide tailing were previously stockpiled until removal in the late 1980's. The pile was sampled and results indicate that the area contains acidic soil with elevated levels of metals. The pile will be covered with a liner, clean soil, a parking lot and native plants. These activities are planned for this spring to ensure inclement weather does not affect the work. Meanwhile, this winter, best management practices are being implemented to stabilize the area and prevent winter rains from eroding the pile. Specifically, a soil adhesive or binding material has been applied to the pile's surface, berms have been installed to prevent water from running onto the RDP from up hill, and drainage channels have been installed downhill of the pile to catch the pile's rain runoff.

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### **Employee Housing Yards Work Plan**

Scientists collected and analyzed more than 140 soil samples from the eight residential yards in the park. The samples included soil taken at various depths, as well as from gravel driveways and drip zones or areas where water collects when rain washes over the roof and exterior walls.

Of the 18 metals that were analyzed from the soil samples, only one metal, arsenic, was consistently found at elevated levels above clean up standards for residential use. There were few instances where other metals exceeded clean up standards. State Parks will continue to work with DTSC to develop an environmental clean up plan at the site and take appropriate action to ensure public health and safety.

Meanwhile, State Parks is making preparations to pave gravel roadways near the houses and to clean the interior of residential homes to remove any dust that may have accumulated from yard soils.

### **Exclusions Work Plan**

Fencing and signage were installed in the summer to restrict access to areas of the park that had previously only had signs designating closed areas. Specific exclusion areas include the Red Dirt Pile, Cyanide Plant, tailing conveyance channel area, Sand Dam tailing area, as well as the Magenta Drain and creek that runs through Memorial Park. These exclusions will remain in place until future actions are completed.

Copies of the reports that summarize test results and work plans are available in the superintendent's office at the park. Copies of the work plans are also online at <http://www.parks.ca.gov/>. Click on "Publications," then scroll down to "Empire Mine SHP." The Some materials are also available for public review at the Empire Mine State Historic Park Visitor Center, at 1079 E. Empire St. in Grass Valley; the Grass Valley Public Library at 207 Mill St.; and at DTSC, 8800 Cal Center Dr. in Sacramento.

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